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State Formation and Social Integration in Pre-modern South and Southeast Asia

A Comparative Study of Asian Society

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Chapter 10

Transitions in the Relationship between Political Elites and the Sufis: The Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-century Delhi Sultanate

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In the making of Muslim societiës in India, its rulers and military elites are always distinguished from the mystics. It is axiomatic to assume that they represent relatively distinct features of Muslim presence in India: the Sultans were the leaders of the political establishment, and their military forces were the intrusive, sometimes violent and usually coercive element that appeared in South Asian history with the establishment of the Sultanate (*c.* 1200 +). Conversely, as proponents of a mystical Islam, Sufis were regarded as the ecumenical face of Islam, preaching to the commoners, often using the vernacular, and communicating complex aspects of Islam and Sufi philosophy through pithy maxims derived from the quotidian experiences of the common people and not just the elites. As an extension of this idea, since Sufis were not involved in the mundane temporal world but with abstract, spiritual praxis, historiographical narratives often placed them outside the realm of history and the vicissitudes of change.[1]

Although not surprising, it is somewhat of a paradox that Sultanate historiography has so frequently binarized the relationship between Sufis and Delhi Sultans and obliterated their larger, shared social contexts. In my re-examination of the subject, rather than treating these as two monolithic agencies, I have organized my study diachronically to bring out both, the transitions that occurred within the several strands that constituted the worlds of the mystics and the Sultanate, and in the ways in which the historian can braid these worlds. Unlike much of the historiography on the subject, I do not ascribe changes within the Sultanate or Sufism to the individual personalities and ambitions of assorted temporal and spiritual protagonists, their material ambitions or spiritual predilections. I would like to shift the analysis to larger contexts within which their histories needs to be transcribed—to the history

[1] See section 1: 'The Historiographical Context' for references to the historiography on which this summary assessment is based.

of Muslim immigration and settlements in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and the production of knowledge and pedagogy that provided form and meaning to congregational Islam in both its temporal and spiritual forms. My paper plots these developments as contexts to comprehend the establishment of Sultanate power and Sufi fraternities. It studies the unique ways in which their histories were situated in Persian literary materials, and how their representations responded, sometimes with great creativity and influence, to the politics of which they were very much a part. How can one penetrate these representations to discover modes of social and political mobilization of people and ideas within the Sultanate, and its temporal and spiritual courts and congregations in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries? For greater cogency in communicating historical transitions through these centuries, my paper is divided into five sections that form distinguishable thematic and chronological units. And to provide a more cogent context for my interventions, I have provided a brief historiographical introduction in the first section.

1. The Historiographical Context

Interpretations of Sufi-Sultan relations had their origins in a conjuncture of several intellectual interventions in the middle of the nineteenth century. The first appeared in attempts to contradict the demonization of Muslim rule which was cast in fanatical, despotic hues in English language histories starting from James Mill's *The History of British India*.[2] Before Mohammad Habib's substantive reconsideration of the colonial interpretation of Sultanate politics, nationalist historians usually pointed to the mystics of Islam as examples that contradicted this general vilification of Muslims as a militant, violent race [M. Habib 1974]. Through the intervention of historians such as Tara Chand [1922], an attempt was made to link the mystical inspiration that guided Sufis and Sufism with *Bhakti* spiritualism as it eventually gained a popular following under teachers such as Kabir and Nanak.

These historiographical interventions shifted the gaze of historians towards subjects such as the making of a benign composite culture rather than the more controversial and violent divisive realm of politics. In this historians were also responding to the politics of their age—events from the 1920s through the 1940s witnessed mass nationalist mobilization, but also the concomitant spread of Hindu-Muslim communitarian distinctions culminating in the 1947 partition of the subcontinent. By reminding their readers of the shared foundations of their composite culture, nationalist historians were trying to counter what they firmly believed was a colonial exercise in 'divide and rule'.

In the immediate aftermath of Independence and Partition, nationalist historians like Mohammad Habib also reconsidered modes of interpreting the Delhi Sultanate

[2] Mill 1972 reprint; for an early review of Mill's work see Grewal 1970.

and the role of Islam in the shaping of Indian history [M. Habib 1974]. This was carried out within an overtly Marxian historiographical tradition which located the Quranic revelation as a momentous revolution with an egalitarian sentiment that was unique in human history. In Habib's interpretation, many of these ideals did not last for long, and Islam's egalitarian inspiration quickly dissipated with state formation and with the emergence of an exploitative ruling class. But by privileging class over communitarian or caste distinctions, Habib also held out the hope that the genuine traces of Quranic idealism might have lingered and, in his argument, these were evident amongst the Sufis, particularly the Chishtis, and their egalitarian and humble message [M. Habib 1946, 1970, 1974]. Not accidentally, these nationalist historians sometimes held up the medieval Chishti Sufis (together with many Bhakti saints) as lessons to counter the obscurantist, conservative and communitarian ideologies of the post-Partition years. Less sophisticated but increasingly detailed aspects of this argument were developed by subsequent scholars, foremost among them being Khaliq A. Nizami, Sayyid Athar A. Rizvi, and Aziz Ahmad [Nizami 1966, 1974, 1987, 1991a, 1991b; Rizvi 1978; Ahmad 1962].

The significant departures in this scholarship came with the research of Richard Eaton and Simon Digby through the 1960s and into the 1990s. Richard Eaton was the first scholar to underline the heterogeneous character of the so-called Sufi movement and to theorize the impact of these differences in the Bijapur Sultanate. Sufis, in his understanding, could be warriors, ascetics, landed elites, scholars and literati, even reformers, and their relationships with the Bijapur Sultans were multilayered and historically constituted [Eaton 1978]. Eaton went on to study Sufism in the frontier tracts of the Brahminical, Sanskritized world and argued that the making of composite cultures was a product of 'creative encounters' between Muslims and vernacular societies in the Punjab and Bengal regions that were distant from the enervating influence of the textual specialists of both, Islam and Brahminical Hinduism [Eaton 1984, 1997]. Digby's work was in the nature of shorter, more incisive readings of the Sufi experience, underlining the politics, the organizational strategies, the great literary creativity, the magical experiences as well as the conservatism and conflicts within its best known mystical fraternities and Sufi preceptors [Digby, 1984, 1986a, 1986b, 1990a, 1990b, 1994, 2004]. These writings sketched out important ways in which Sufi literary materials could be critically parsed but the impact of his work remained marginal since he did not produce a full length monograph on the subject and was seldom self-reflexive of his methodology.

Quite independent of Digby's interventions, it was the study of the literary resources and how they refracted mystical practice that was further developed in the writings of Carl Ernst and Bruce Lawrence, two scholars who intensively studied different branches of the Chishti mystical order, translated and wrote commentaries on their teachings and eventually collaborated to write a major text on this group [Lawrence 1978, 1983, 1984, 1986, 1993; Ernst 1992, 2000; Ernst and Lawrence

2002]. Their work was important because of its emphasis on reading the literary production of Sufis for the ways in which it constructed a variety of paradigms including the authority of its greatest teachers. For the first time a distinction was made between different types of Sufi *isharat* literature, instructional digests, and the rhetorical intent behind their production. Carl Ernst distinguished these as either 'initiatic', those that established the credentials of the teacher and his [*sic*][3] unique spiritual method, *tariqa*, and 'retrospective' texts, those that recounted the history of a teacher's contribution and, with the benefit of hindsight, contextualised him within a larger body of his peers [Ernst 1992].

Although these interventions were salutary in disaggregating a generic, monolithic understanding of Sufism, it did not shift the historiographical emphasis from the great mystic saints and the writings surrounding them; in the writings of even as sensitive a scholar as Riazul Islam, whose research methodology approximated Digby's, the great Sufi Shaykhs remained the privileged actors in the history of Sufism [Islam 2003]. In this context, Richard Eaton's writings were distinctive for their plotting larger transitions in the history of Muslim society and embedding Sufis and the Sultans within more capacious social and political contexts as well as historically contingent inter-personal engagements. It was difficult, however, for most scholars to build on Eaton's arguments since they privileged a unique experience of Islam in Bengal, the Punjab and the Deccan, explicitly suggesting that the experiences of the peripheries of the subcontinent, its pastoral frontier zones, differed from its core territories, the Gangetic plain.[4] This left the study of the relationships between the Chishti saints and the Delhi Sultans *in situ* even as it argued for differences in Sufi-Sultan engagements elsewhere in the subcontinent. In an effort to engage with this historiography, I begin my study with the thirteenth century, a period when few Sufi hospices are reported from the central tracts of the Delhi Sultanate, the antecedents, in other words, of the formation of the Chishti and other Sufi *tariqa*s (schools) in Hindustan.

2. 1190-1290: The Search for Paramountcy and a Shari'a Based Order

Although the Delhi Sultanate dates from the thirteenth century, it is important to reiterate that the presence of Muslim societies in the subcontinent predates that by several centuries. The point is worth remembering in the context of a diffusion of ideas concerning the Muslim faith in the Punjab and Sind basins and the Gujarat littoral (ignoring for the moment the southern peninsula altogether), and the long-term

[3] While Sufi texts recognized the mystic learning and intuitive knowledge of some women, the preceptors of large congregations were all men.

[4] Eaton 2003; for a critique see also Kumar 2008.

relations these areas had with Afghanistan, Makran-Sistan, the Hadramawt, and Red Sea regions [Flood 2009; Lambourne 2008]. As is suggested by Hujwiri's instructional text on Sufism written in Lahore, the *Kashf al-Mahjub* (the first, so far as we know, to be written in Persian), or Aufi's biographical digest of Persian poets in the Iranian world produced in Qubacha's court at the end of the twelfth century, or the Arabic epitaphs on the gravestones of the Karimi merchants from the regions of Saurashtra, there was a complex transmission of ideas and knowledge systems concerning Islam and its attendant social organizations into the subcontinent [Hujwiri 1976; Goitein 1968; Desai 2004]. These followed trade routes and patterns of settlement whose connections have only recently drawn some historiographical attention. In the context of Sufi thought we have only vague and disconnected information regarding the extent of and the agents involved in the diffusion of mystical ideas in the Punjab or the Sind regions through the eleventh into the thirteenth century, the period of the Ghaznavid settlements.

As details from the late twelfth century become somewhat clearer, the widespread circulation of mystical ideas in the areas of the old Ghaznavid regime (Afghanistan and Punjab), now under the Shansabanid dynasty of Ghur, Bamian and Ghazni is incontestable. They abound in Minhaj-i Siraj Juzjani's history of Khalifas and Sultans of the Muslim community, both in terms of direct agency such as the promise elicited from Sultan Iltutmish to always revere dervishes when he attained power, to mystical ideas of divination when God intervened to help Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni find water for his army in the deserts of India [Juzjani 1963-1964: vol. 1, 230, 442]. These details are interesting because they appear in a history written by a jurist, a manager of schools and mosques, and a person who was a particularly gifted sermonizer, capable of motivating armies and Sufis alike by his exhortations from Quranic passages.[5] In the binaries in which historians sometimes divide the textual and the spiritual, this was not an individual who would ordinarily be understood to have mystical inclinations. On the other hand, Juzjani stands as an important example of a person who was exceptional but by no means unique in spanning the gap between a scholastic, textually grounded reading of Islam (an *'alim,* singular; *'ulama*, plural) and an esoteric, emotionally inspired, mystically charged sensibility of the revealed religion.[6]

Amongst the early thirteenth century migrants who were seeking a fortune in Delhi, a mystical understanding of Islam was widespread and it continued through much of the century. Perhaps the greatest encouragement for the spread of Sufism in north India was, paradoxically, the destruction of the great centers of Islamic learning and urbanity in the central Islamic lands by the Chinggis Khanid invasions. The

[5] On the *tazkir*, semons/exhortations, see Juzjani 1963-1964: vol. 1, 447-448; vol. 2, 76.

[6] On Nizam al-Din Auliya's evaluation of Juzjani's mystical inclinations see Sijzi 1990: 407-408, 429-430.

holocaust created a great fear: it led to mass immigration into the western Iranian lands and into India, especially but not just of elites. As people faced their mortality and the fear created by dislocation and migration, there was also a widespread sense of an impending Day of Judgement. Juzjani provides us with a sense of the different classes of people that arrived in the garrison towns of north India—the learned, and the unlettered, the artisan and the soldier—and the many kinds of Islam that they espoused. The arrival of these immigrants coincided with the period of the greatest territorial expansion of the Delhi Sultanate under Sultan Iltutmish who, in the 1220s, extended his domain into Lakhnauti in Bengal and Dewal in Sindh. This Sultanate controlled many important urban centers in north India, but not their hinterland or even predictable control of the riverine trade routes that connected its garrisons. Delhi's governance of its domain was therefore, not only limited but also always precarious [Kumar 2007: 129-298].

In this context, the spread of mystical ideas that believed in the proximate spiritual presence of a variety of potent supernatural agents of God—a vast range of 'unseen people', the *mardan-i ghaib*, of people with the capacity of miraculous intervention to protect, heal and minister in times of trouble, of jinns and other more malevolent beings—was widespread. All of these were very much a part of Islam, and these beliefs coexisted with others more textualized ones that relied upon a codex of theological and juridical proof that were frequently at odds with each other on matters of exegesis leading to considerable social and political antagonism. In short, at the moment of the inception of the Delhi Sultanate there were deep cleavages within its society and body politic.[7]

The creation of a homogenous Muslim community out of disparate groups of immigrants, with no social ties and little by way of a shared history or culture, was an extremely difficult, but an essential task for an emerging Sultanate aspiring to paramountcy. And it was in this context that a textualized understanding of the *Shari'a* was foregrounded as a means to cohere immigrants.[8] While Sultan Iltutmish and his commanders constructed the congregational spaces—the mosques, the *'idgah*s, and the *madrasah*s—the learned jurists and theologians would instruct and socialize Muslims along a righteous 'socially cognisable behaviour' (see Fig. 10.1—Delhi's first congregational mosque (*masjid-i jami'*) and the minaret.). Neither the Sultan nor the *'ulama* were overly concerned as long as Sufis practiced their faith in private. Since it was behaviour and action that was under scrutiny, it was Sufi public activities and congregational organization, the means to attract and expand fraternities that were policed [Kumar 2001, 2008].

[7] For a brilliant development of this theme see Digby 1986a and also Kumar 2007: 192-237.

[8] Compare Alam 2004: 26-50, 82-91, who makes this point but from a differing point of view.

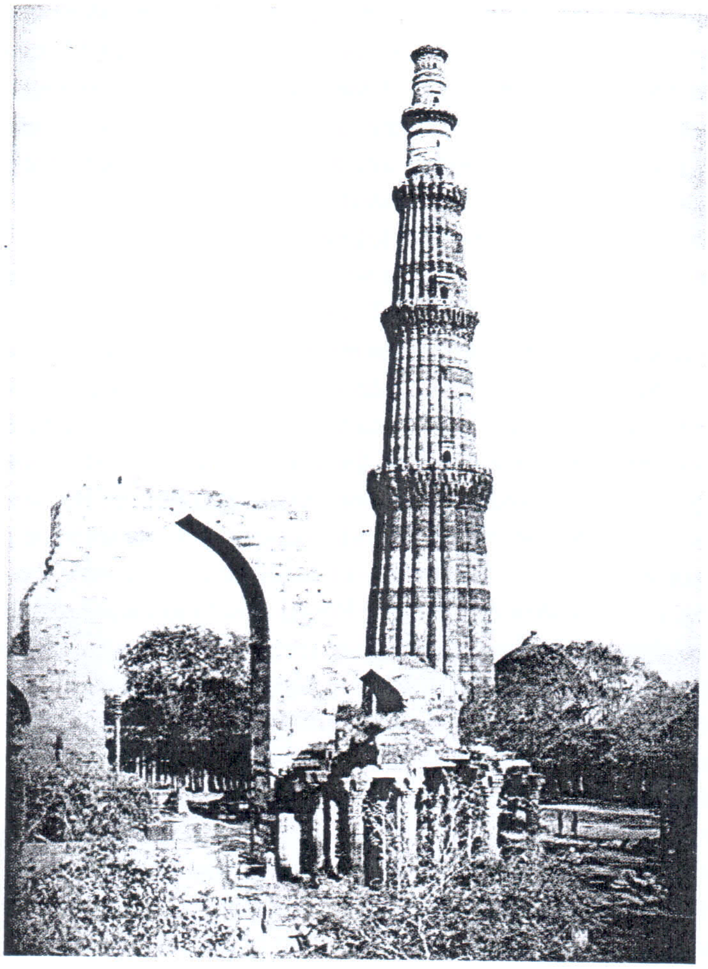


Fig. 10.1: Delhi's masjid-i jami' and the Qutb

Esoteric understandings of mystical Islam could garner a huge amount of charismatic influence to those who were adept in its practice and decided to function as teachers of the mystical path. It was the pedagogical aspect of mysticism which could lead to the organization of fraternities with internal codes of conduct and discipline and reproduction of their teaching. But this was also potentially dangerous: these exclusive Sufi fraternities could also contradict efforts at establishing an inclusive, homogenous community of Muslims adhering to a common orthopraxis. It is therefore interesting that Sufi literary materials and chronicles have a large number of references to public inquisitions (*mahzar*s) from the 1220s and 1230s, during the reign of Sultan Iltutmish. Many of the details surrounding these inquisitions are patent exaggerations, but they build around actual events which were retrospectively fictionalized. Without exception, all the reports that we have of people whose conduct was investigated in these *mahzar*s were the Sufis. As in the case of the Sufi saint Qutb

al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki, they were either coerced to mend their ways or, like Jalal al-Din Tabrizi, expelled from the city and the community of Muslims. This was the triumph of the textualized praxis of the *Shari'a*, and even though no attempt was made to erase mystical ideas from the urban centers of the Sultanate, Sufis were not allowed to organize their pedagogy into anything that approximated a congregational organization. There was severe protest at this coercive intrusion: in 1236 a Sufi derwish, Nur Turk, galvanized his followers sufficiently to attack Delhi's *masjid-i jami'*, a site controlled by the *'ulama* who were, in the derwish's opinion, leading the faithful into error [Kumar 2001, 2007: 192-237].

It is these movements, rather than mystical thought in itself, which were regarded as threats to the emerging political order of the Delhi Sultanate, and became therefore, the subjects of significant disciplinary action. The consequences of Iltutmish's intervention sanitized most areas of the core territories of the Sultanate from Sufi congregational activity, and this situation did not change until Balban's reign (r. 1266-1287). During this period, however, Sufi hospices were established in the far eastern and western wings of the Sultanate—in Lakhnauti which saw the development of Jalal al-Din Tabrizi's shrine, and in the Punjab and Sindh where Baba Farid and Baha al-Din Zakariyya respectively established their hospices. In the Chishti records of the following generation the dissimilarities between the two fledgling hospices received some attention: Baha al-Din Zakariyya's *khanqah* was in Multan, a major garrison and commercial center of the Sultanate. By contrast, Baba Farid's hospice was distant from direct Sultanate supervision. The mystical practice of the two differed in some key essentials. Baha al-Din Zakariyya managed a resplendent urban *khanqah* with considerable resources which the local military commander, it was reported, could also access during times of want [Sijzi 1990: 236-237]. His mysticism was also based more squarely on a textualized understanding of the *shari'a*; while stoutly defending his intuitive access to esoteric knowledge of Islam, *nur-i batin*, he did not practice its more controversial exercises of invocatory singing (*sama'*), at least not in public [Sijzi 1990: 172, 234-235, 391, 399-400]. Baba Farid, on the other hand, lived a less ostentatious personal life even though his *khanqah* eventually became the center of considerable material transactions—it reportedly received and disbursed charity until no one returned from the saint's threshold without receiving something.[9] Distant from the sites of Sultanate supervision, this hospice was also able to ward off efforts at curbing its practice. The judge of Ajudhan attempted to get a decree proscribing *sama'* and *raqs* (ritual dancing), but was unsuccessful since the Baba's influence was too powerful in the region [Sijzi 1990: 166].

From relatively humble origins, these *khanqahs* developed into strong centers of mystical instruction, where other than general Sufi precepts, novitiates were also

[9] For a valuable, detailed review of the materials regarding the early Chishti practice of *futuh*, charity, and *kasab*, seeking a living, see Islam 2002: 87-215.

taught the history of their preceptor's particular interpretation of mysticism. The carefully calibrated response of the Delhi Sultanate to these developments was also visible in the visitation of Ulugh Khan, the future Sultan Balban, to the hospice of Baba Farid in the Punjab. While restricting Sufi settlements in the core territories of the Sultanate, Ulugh Khan did not mind visiting and providing additional credibility to a shrine in the Punjab especially since it was 'conveniently' located in his competitor's territory [Sijzi 1990: 373-374; Kumar 2007: 293-295]. But these shrines were not always amenable to easy manipulation: the histories that accrued around the grave of Salar Mas'ud at Bahraich responded to the local military commander's challenge to Ulugh Khan. It possessed a popular hagiography that revered its intimate connections with the local pastoral political economy, much as the local military commander, Qutlugh Khan, established alliances with the neighbouring chieftains in his conflict with the capital. Delhi's victory led to the Sultanate colonization of the region of Bahraich and it also meant constructing a new hagiography for Salar Masud's shrine, uprooting it from its local context and providing it with a new cosmopolitan identity that was closer to Delhi's pretensions of being the 'Sanctuary of Muslims' in the subcontinent [Amin 2005; Kumar 2007: 347-351].

Sufism had multiple manifestations through the thirteenth century and there were strands of it that the Delhi Sultans embraced in their efforts to communicate their religious credentials. Equally, there were aspects of Sufism that had to be carefully controlled (or, at least, carefully supervised) because of their ability to empower alternate loci of authority. Mysticism or those that followed and espoused its traditions were not the problem; through the thirteenth century it was efforts at establishing congregational Sufism that felt the brunt of the Sultanate's coercive authority. It was a coercive regime and one that contradicted itself at many levels. In this, its attitude to Sufism was not very different from its response to the multitude of settlements cropping up in north India through the thirteenth century. Sultanate ability to police and manage their domain broke down constantly [Kumar 2007: 238-361]. As we will see in the following section, it was definitively challenged in the 1290s when the Sufis disputed both, the textualized *Shari'a* regime and the paramountcy of the Sultan in Delhi itself.

3. Nizam al-Din Auliya's Challenge—Delhi and Its Two Sultans, 1290s-1330s

Some time during the last years of Balban's reign (d. 1287), Baba Farid sent his student, Nizam al-Din Auliya, to Delhi to establish a hospice. The young disciple chose Ghiyaspur as the site of his *khanqah,* some distance from the old capital in Delhi but, as it turned out, very close to the city's new capital in Kilukhri. The 1290s were politically turbulent years for the Delhi Sultans with intense competition amongst rival military contenders seeking to establish their hegemony over the Delhi region.

In the midst of these developments, Barani describes how the Sufi, Sidi Muwallih, who had resided in Delhi for several years, started showing antinomian tendencies and started rallying those who were disaffected with the new Sultan, Jalal al-Din Khalaji (r. 1290-1296), going so far as to plot a coup against the monarch. In doing so, Sidi Muwallih went against the advice of Baba Farid, his friend and advisor, to not meddle in the politics of the state. Sidi Muwallih's plot failed and he was executed for his rebellious intentions [Barani 1860-1862: 208-212, and the extremely useful discussion in Digby 1984].

It seems that this Sufi's experience was not lost on Nizam al-Din Auliya. In marked contrast to Sidi Muwallih, Nizam al-Din gradually built his congregation of adherents and did not draw the adverse attention of either Sultan Kaiqubad (r. 1287-1290) and Jalal al-Din Khalaji. By 1308, when Amir Hasan Sijzi started compiling his account of Nizam al-Din Auliya's teachings in the *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad,* in the midst of Sultan 'Ala al-Din's reign (r. 1296-1316), the signs of a well-established hospice were in evidence. Nizam al-Din Auliya already had a substantial body of followers who were important agents in spreading his credentials as a great teacher in the region of Delhi. This influence extended to courtly circles as well: Amir Khusrau (the eminent poet of the age) and Ziya' al-Din Barani (a courtier who was just making his mark) were both disciples of the Sufi Shaykh.[10] While we are unable to mark the precise transitions in the establishment of Nizam al-Din's authority in Delhi through the 1290s, his *malfuzat*, the *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad* is very useful in helping us comprehend his strategies in disseminating a new message regarding congregational Sufism to the residents of the capital of the Sultanate.

To begin with it, it is important to keep in mind that the *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad* was not a verbatim record of the Sufi saint's teachings[11]; it was an edited, carefully textualized form produced by Amir Hasan Sijzi, that could resonate with the voice of the saint in conversation with his disciples. Amir Hasan Sijzi was careful to pick up a popular genre of literature used to recount fictitious conversations of pious Muslims, but he also historicized it by underlining that it was compiled and edited by the Shaykh himself. The account of each assembly that he recounted was dated to lend it authenticity. In so doing, Sijzi produced a text that was read and discussed by people who were curious about Nizam al-Din Auliya's teachings, which carried with it elements of a popular genre together with all the elements of the classical *isharat* text. He was careful to retain the dialogic element of the oral conversations of his master in the text and interspersed the narrative with questions and responses, anecdotes and parables. Although the text appeared to leave considerable freedom to

[10] For a useful discussion of Amir Khusrau as a disciple of Nizam al-Din Auliya see Sharma 2005 and for the role of Nizam al-Din's disciples in enhancing his reputation see Lawrence 1986.

[11] For a useful analysis of the origins of the *malfuzat* genre see Zilli forthcoming.

the reader's cognitive abilities in gathering the meaning of the seemingly open-ended anecdotes, this was largely illusory: Nizam al-Din and Sijzi crafted these stories within a narrative that guided their audience to determined conclusions [Ernst 1992: 63-68, 79-84; Kumar 2007: 374-377].

The *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad* was very careful to never discuss any regnant monarch; it only spoke uncritically and infrequently of the past rulers in contexts where people could learn from their conduct. On the other hand, the text spoke frequently of the past heroes of Islam: the Prophet, the Khalifas, jurists, scholars and Sufi preceptors. They were placed in the text as heroes and paradigms, stars that gazed on the Muslim community and benignly guided them through their daily travails. Not all of the protagonists cited by Nizam al-Din in his teachings were of equal social stature and the *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad* was littered with accounts of ordinary, unlettered people whose spiritual knowledge was manifest in their intuitive ability to reach the spiritual truth without scholarly accoutrement.[12] Certainly the 'heroes' of the *malfuzat* were very different from the Sultans and their servants, the chief actors in the Persian chronicles. Through an account of the lives and actions of these alternate set of 'heroes', Nizam al-Din Auliya initiated spiritual adepts into the rhetoric of mystic doctrines, and introduced the laity to a *shari'a* orthopraxis which carried the special interpretation of the Shaykhs. Although the *malfuzat* was not organized as a linear chronology of the past, it appealed to antiquity in support of the claims of its protagonist through narrative strategies which were very different, but as effective as that of the courtly chronicles. More than the exploits of the various Sultans recounted in the *tawarikh*, Muslims were impressed by the historical anecdotes which recounted the achievements of their Shaykhs. And here the *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad* served the important purpose of introducing a genealogy of teachers that comprised a unique mystic path initiated by the Khwajas of Chisht in Afghanistan. Notably absent in his recollections was any reference to Mu'in al-Din Chishti, always referred in later Chishti literature as the 'founder' of the order. The most extensive referencing in the *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad* was to Baba Farid, Nizam al-Din's master, followed by episodes from the life of Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki, Baba Farid's teacher. This was, then, a[n incipient Chishti] method, *tariqa,* that Nizam al-Din wanted his adherents to revere and learn as a part of their training in mysticism [Sijzi 1990: 15-16].[13] And Nizam al-Din was never ambiguous regarding the critical, salutary role that the Shaykhs played in the lives of their disciples as teachers and protectors; without them their lives were forsaken and so too, the territory (*wilayat*) where they resided [Sijzi 1990: 4, 99, 249-250. Note his

[12] Note, for example, the references to the intuitive knowledge of the unlettered Hasan Afghan in Sijzi 1990: 15-16.

[13] Notably absent in the *Fawa'id al-Fuad* is any acknowledgement of Mu'in al-din Chishti as the founder of the Chishti order although the disciples of the Khwajagan-i Chisht, the great Sufi preceptors of Chisht, receive a fleeting mention [Sijzi 1990: 146-147].

decorated shrine, Fig. 10.2, which communicates the great veneration with which the sufi is still held today].

Nizam al-Din Auliya structured a system of belief which was upheld by the axial role played by the Sufi Shaykhs in the lives of ordinary Muslims. This contradicted the foundations of the textual *Shari'a* praxis that the Delhi Sultans had laboured to construct over the previous century. If an alternative praxis of Islam could have such a powerful exponent, it was not long before its followers would take the textual route to criticize its detractors. In the middle of the fourteenth century it was no longer necessary to attack Delhi *masjid-i jami'*, an author like Barani could construct a historical narrative that condemned Sultan 'Ala al-Din Khalaji for his ignorance of the *Shari'a* [Kumar 2000, 2001]. And as it happens, it is this representation of the politics of the age that lingered historically [Lal 1980: 271-276].

What was erased from historical memory was 'Ala al-Din's contributions to institutions that sustained textual learning of theology and jurisprudence. This Sultan extended the capital's *masjid-i jami'* till it was twice the size of Iltutmish's mosque, he built *'idgahs* and *madrasahs* and dredged the largest reservoir that the city had seen, all signs of his piety. Since these were all 'public' structures, they also communicated the Sultan's commitment to congregational Islam. Like Nizam al-Din

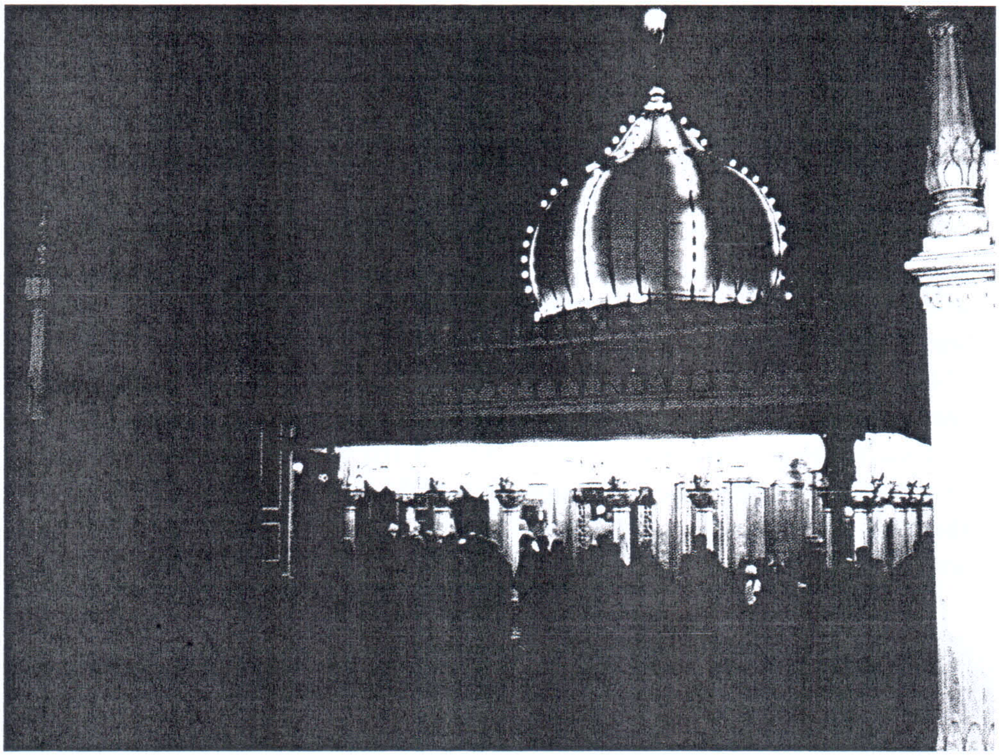


Fig. 10.2: Nizam al-Din's shrine in Ghiyaspur, Delhi (contemporary photograph)

Auliya, 'Ala al-Din Khalaji also left personal statements regarding his unequalled piety as epigraphs for all to see as they entered Delhi's *masjid-i jami'* and here he claimed that he was like Moses and David, the law-givers of the past, the individual who restored the teachings of the Hanafi school after a hiatus of many years. The Sultan and the Sufi Shaykh may well have been addressing each other when each claimed personal responsibility for the efflorescence of Islam in Hindustan, the first for constructing holy mosques where the Sufis came to pray, and the latter for suggesting that mosques would remain piles of profane stone and mortar until Sufis of his ilk sacralized the site by their holy presence [Kumar 2000].

Although the discursive engagement between the two protagonists can be juxtaposed very effectively to bring out their discrete claims, this would be problematic on two counts. To begin with, there is no gainsaying the brute power and great material resources commanded by the Delhi Sultan especially at the beginning of the fourteenth century after the Sultanate had annexed parts of Gujarat and gained huge resources from the Deccan campaigns. Even a partisan chronicler like Ziya al-Din Barani (d. *c.* 1360) recognized that 'Ala al-Din might have been impious but he had performed a rare service to Islam in crushing the infidel Hindu chieftains whose wives were forced to work as maids in the houses of Muslim elites [Barani 1860-1862: 308-309; Jackson 1999: 170-175, 220-231, 238-249; I. Habib 1984]. Although laced with hyperbole, this inadvertent recognition was a realistic admission by the medieval historian that claims and counter-claims notwithstanding, the Sultan's domination could be contested, but not rivalled by the Sufi Shaykh in Delhi. In that context, while the Sufi hospice had arrived in Delhi by the end of the thirteenth century, it negotiated for space without yet displacing or dramatically altering the disciplinary modes of Sultanate governance.

From a different perspective, it also needs acknowledgement that the early fourteenth century was important for the introduction of vital new trends that shaped the relationship between the Sultans and Sufis. The first was evident in the remarkable energy with which the Sufis, and not just Nizam al-Din Auliya, commenced organizing their mystical fraternities all over north India during this period. Although Barani does not admit it, another chronicle and a Sufi source recognized that Sultan 'Ala al-Din Khalaji was himself the disciple of an antinomian Sufi, Khwaja Gurg, a derwish who resided in Kara where 'Ala al-Din Khalaji had served as governor [Digby 1994; Kumar 2007: 344-347]. This derwish had links with Baha al-Din Zakariyya of Multan. Khwaja Gurg had a prescient premonition of 'Ala al-Din's seizure of the throne and his future greatness as a Sultan. When 'Ala al-Din did become the Sultan of Delhi, he invited his Sufi master to the capital. The derwish refused, preferring Kara over Delhi. But it is useful to consider the counterfactual for a moment—what would have been the future of Sultan-Sufi relations in Delhi had Khwaja Gurg established his hospice in the capital?

The question is worthwhile to consider because it helps in complicating the hostile juxtapositions in which Sultan-Sufi relationships are usually cast. It is important to go beyond these polarities and consider the circularity of ideas, the ease with which a *Shari'a* based Islam and Sufism could cohabit or compete in close proximity of each other. The volume of extant literary material around 'Ala al-Din Khalaji and Nizam al-Din Auliya can blind us to the more complex negotiations that were also afoot during this time. Not often recognized is the fact that it was during 'Ala al-Din's reign that Sufis belonging to the Suhrawardy fraternity of Multan and the Firdausiyya of Bihar were also present in Delhi. The *Siyar al-Awliya*, a mid-fourteenth-century biographical digest of Chishti Shaykhs, mentions them in the context of their relations with Nizam al-Din Auliya, the former respectfully acknowledging his authority, while the disciples of the latter perished in an ignoble accident because of their disrespectful conduct [Khwurd 1978: 157]. The Chishti and the Firdausi records that mentioned this incident situated their protagonists in their narratives in very partial ways. It appears from the Chishti *tazkirat* that at least the Suhrawardy Sufi was in Delhi at the invitation of the Khalaji monarch [Digby 1986a]. So it is not Sufis per se that the monarch could not get along with; the relationship was conditioned by a variety of other factors as well.

It is important to clarify that the presence of the Suhrawardy and Firdausi Shaykhs in Delhi was not an isolated event. Buried in the story of Khwaja Gurg, and the earlier Sidi Muwallih, are other telling details: both were ascribed trans-regional ties with Sufi masters without being part of their fraternities, the first with the Suhrawardys in Multan and the latter with the Chishtis in Ajudhan [Kumar 2007: 345, 351]. These received passing mention in the literature of the time, but that they were referenced at all was indicative of how political participants at that time gave importance to internal, trans-regional networks amongst Sufis. Not surprisingly, it is Nizam al-Din Auliya, about whom we have the greatest amount of information, and it is the details concerning the management of his disciples that gives us an insight into how these trends came to be important later in the fourteenth century.

The *Siyar al-Awliya* provides lists of deputies (*khalifa*s) appointed by Baba Farid and Nizam al-Din Auliya during their tenure as masters of a gradually evolving Chishti fraternity. The numbers of these deputies increase dramatically during Nizam al-Din's lifetime when particular individuals were appointed to prepare the diplomas (*ijazatnama*s) that gave *khalifa*s the right to instruct novices in the mystical path and enrol disciples in the *wilayat*s placed in their safe-keeping [Gulati 2005; Balachandran 2015]. In an interesting anecdote concerning the dispatch of an armed contingent by Sultan 'Ala al-Din Khalaji to Chanderi, it was mentioned that the military commander wanted someone appointed by Nizam al-Din Auliya to accompany him to provide spiritual protection and guidance. Nizam al-Din sent Maulana Wajih al-Din Yusuf with the troops. The *Siyar al-Awliya* also notes that a subsequent commander of Chanderi harassed Maulana Wajih al-Din Yusuf because the soldiers revered the Sufi.

As his harassed soldier-disciples left Chanderi, Maulana Wajih al-Din Yusuf also considered going to Lakhnauti at the invitation of the Sultan's recently appointed governor. Maulana Wajih al-Din Yusuf petitioned Nizam al-Din for permission which was denied; he was requested to continue his ministry at Chanderi [Khwurd 1978: 296-297, see also Digby 2004: 308-314]. Despite the embellishment in the partisan reportage of the *Siyar al-Awliya*, the Sufi text was now developing the twinned realms of the spiritual and the temporal where the diffusion of the Chishti fraternity over much of Hindustan was [oftentimes] in tandem with the expansion of the Sultanate domains. There was more than an accidental congruence in the way the Khalaji military and civil administration strove for increasing coherence over its domains in the early fourteenth century, and the efforts at organization evident within the Chishtiyya fraternity under Nizam al-Din's guidance. As the Sultanate intruded into the interior of the countryside and into the Deccan from Balban's reign into 'Ala al-Din's, establishing settlements and clearing the land, the Sufi presence sometimes preceded and/or followed close at hand. Beginning with Baba Farid and picking up during Nizam al-Din's leadership the increase in the appointment of *khalifa*s in distant towns and *qasba*s meant that the coercive implementation of the *Shari'a* within a sanitized core territory of the Sultanate would become increasingly difficult and complex. And quite in contrast to the processes sketched by Richard Eaton, the aggressive consolidation and expansion of the Sultanate and the Sufi congregations were from this moment, concurrent developments that touched the 'core and the periphery' equally; they had overlapping, not distinctive, 'frontiers' of engagement [Eaton 2003: 'Introduction', see also Kumar 2008]. Muslim societies in their new settlements engaged with the spiritual and the temporal in equal measure and would work out ways in the coming generation of transcribing these overlapping sentiments into their dicta in complex and innovative modes [Alam 2004, for the Deccan see Green 2012].

4. Histories and Settlements: Lording Over the Sultanate 1330-1380

A large expanse of the fourteenth century covered the reigns of Muhammad Shah (r. 1324-1351) and Firuz Shah Tughluq (r. 1352-1388) but the reigns of these monarchs are rarely studied together. In conventional historiography the eccentric rule of the former during which the Sultanate reached its greatest territorial expanse is contrasted with the effete rule of the latter, when, in the words of one scholar, the Sultanate underwent 'stasis and decline' [Jackson 1999: ch. 15]. In their relationship with Sufi Shaykhs, both rulers are generally shown as being unsympathetic: the former favouring a scholastic theology inspired, as some historians argue, by the teachings of Ibn Taymiyya, which curtailed the influence of charismatic mystics, and the latter's incapacity to rule leading to the dominance of the *'ulama* in the affairs

of the court and the imposition of a conservative, bigoted rule that oppressed non-Muslims as well as Sufis [Husain 1976: 311-513, 640-641].

Beyond the personality-driven politics, however, it is important to keep in mind how Muslim society and the Sultanate had altered in significant ways over the preceding decades. There was now a proliferation of *khanqah*s which functioned as accessible sites for the teaching of religious texts and the processes of socializing novices into the Muslim community. Through anecdotes and parables the Sufi Shaykhs informed their lay disciples about Muslim praxis and the history of the community. The disciples who resided in the *khanqah*s were given training in exegesis; the Shaykh enforced decorum, punished offenders and at the end certified accomplished disciples as teachers, exegetes and preceptors who could enrol their own disciples. These *khanqah*s were more than schools and the Sufi Shaykhs far more influential in the lives of their students than a teacher. It is not surprising, therefore, that their followers respectfully and endearingly referred to them as *Shaykh al-Islam*, a person who was the final arbiter on matters relating to pedagogy and social conduct. By the middle of the fourteenth century, these *khanqah*s had become one of the central organizing nodes for the proliferating Muslim settlements in Hindustan.[14]

As Sufi centers of education and training expanded there was also a marked increase in the different modes of textualizing the practices of Sufi masters: their teachings were inscribed in letters to their disciples, some like Sharaf al-Din Maneri's (d. *c.* 1381) were compiled into a volume of 'A Hundred Letters' for easier access [Maneri 1980]. Others built on Nizam al-Din Auliya's precedent and had disciples that produced volumes of their master's teachings—Nizam al-Din's successor in Delhi, Nasir al-Din Chiragh's (d. 1356) teachings were preserved in the *Khayr al-Majalis*; those of his successor in the Deccan, Burhan al-Din Gharib (d. 1340) were compiled in the *Ahsan al-Aqwal* and the *Nafa'is al-anfas*.[15] This process of textualizing instruction produced different pedagogical formations around the respective saints. These did not present a homogenous understanding of mystical Islam. It was textured instead by the immediate histories of each master—their [oftentimes disputed] assertions to spiritual succession, their claims to a personal spiritual awakening, the lineage of preceptors that shaped their learning, and their spatial location within what was now getting to be a heavily trafficked network of Sufi hospices. Irrespective of the choice of the textual medium, they all focused sharply on the personality of the Shaykhs who were their teachers, and the sites of instruction. It was a significant means by which

[14] The literature on Sufi pirs as pedagogues is thickest for Nizam al-Din Auliya. See for example, Lawrence 1984, 1986; Ernst 1992; Ernst and Lawrence 2002. But see also the excellent work of Islam 2002; Jha 2008, and the still useful Nizami 1966.

[15] Qalandar 1959. For a discussion of the *Ahsan al-Aqwal* and the *Nafa'is al-anfas* see Ernst 1992: 71-77.

individual Shaykhs constructed histories of their ministry and it served to distinguish the several protagonists from each other [Ernst 1992].[16]

It would have been possible to ignore these discrete efforts at inscribing history but for the concurrent production of more synthetic overviews of the period as well. The Sufi effort was best represented in the *Siyar al-Auliya* written by Amir Khwurd in the 1360s [Khwurd 1978]. Amir Khwurd was from the Kirmani family of Sayyids whose members were wealthy and politically influential. They had a long association with Baba Farid in Ajudhan, and Amir Khwurd was based for a time in Delhi with Nizam al-Din Auliya. His own, and his family's close association with the Chishtis meant that Amir Khwurd was personally close to their senior disciples including the litterateurs, Amir Khusrau, Amir Hasan Sijzi and Ziya al-Din Barani. Some time in the 1360s he crafted his text the *Siyar al-Auliya*, a history of the Chishti Shaykhs. Although produced as a biographical digest, *tazkirat*, the text was unusual in its rather precise chronological coverage of only the first four Chishti Shaykhs, followed by an account of their *khalifa*s and the body of teachings, the *summa*, as it were, that defined the Chishti order. While the basic source used by Amir Khwurd was the *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad*, this material was carefully rearranged into themes to give it a more conventional *isharat*, instructional, catechismal character. The biographical accounts of the early Shaykhs were further embellished by the information available to the author from the members of his family. Much of it was fictitious but its chronology was carefully calibrated with the Sultanate chroniclers so that the advent of the Chishtis in South Asia—with the arrival of Mu'in al-Din Chishti in Ajmer—preceded the victorious arrival of the Sultans in Delhi in 1191. In this account, the Chishtis appeared as the agents who established Islam in India and its Shaykhs were the protectors and supporters of the Muslim community, not the Delhi Sultans.[17]

At the same time as the *Siyar al-Auliya,* in the 1360s, there was a huge production of historical writing. This decade saw the completion of the two great histories of the Sultanate: Barani's *Ta'rikh-i Firuz Shahi* and 'Isami's *Futuh al-Salatin* [Barani 1860-1862; 'Isami 1940].[18] While Barani's *Ta'rikh* eulogized Firuz Tughluq, it also presented the Chishti Shaykhs and their teachings as the real saviours of Islam during the rule of its many incompetent Sultans. 'Isami's text was produced in South India

[16] We have to appreciate that a for a latter day readership many of the details about local quotidian incidents littered in the *malfuzat* would remain insignificant since they lack context. These were familiar to the members in the *majlis* of the Shaykh, providing a distinctive, rooted context to the anecdotes. Rather than flattening this textual landscape, the challenge to modern scholarship is in discovering the nuanced modes by which each Shaykh made their pedagogy relevant in the lives of the visitors to their congregations [Kumar 2016 forthcoming].

[17] The *Siyar al-Auliya* has been mined for information but hardly studied. But see now Gulati 2005 and Balachandran 2015.

[18] For a discussion of these texts see Hardy 1966 reprint and Kumar 2007. On 'Isami see the very useful Anooshahr 2012.

and was hostile in its reportage of the Tughluq monarchs even as it respectfully acknowledged the importance of the Sufis to the Muslim settlements in north India and the Deccan. These histories also communicate a different consciousness of the past: these were deliberately framed as histories of the victorious Muslim community in South Asia, a narrower aperture than the great universal history of Juzjani which started with the Prophets and Caliphs. Although they referred to the lives of the great Muslim heroes of the Central Islamic lands, these were situated as moral aphorisms and not as a part of their chronological narrative.[19] By the middle of the fourteenth century there was sufficient time-depth for authors to theorize afresh on how they wanted to situate the Muslim past in India and in this they shifted to Ghaznavid origins rather than Prophetic and Caliphal ones [Kumar 2013]. It was this [re-] orientation that was reflected in the writings of Amir Khurd, Barani and 'Isami, each narrating the histories of Muslim settlements in the subcontinent in different ways, but all of them finding in this historical process a common thread in the critical agency of the Sufis and, even if they were sometimes severely criticized, the Delhi Sultans.

The corpus of work discussed so far was heavily weighted in its favourable reporting of the Sufis, but the reign of Firuz Shah Tughluq (r. 1351-1388) was also a period that saw unique self-statements by the Delhi Sultan regarding his heritage and moral right to governance over the Muslim community. Not least amongst these was the *Futuhat-i Firuz Shahi* originally an epigraph in the monarch's *masjid-i jami'* but later transcribed into a textual medium [Shah 1996]. The significant portion of the text narrates the pious achievements of the monarch—he was the upholder of the *Shari'a* and in that context he curbed innovation, both spiritual and temporal—a claim that was, in itself, quite unremarkable. But the text also constructed a new genealogy for the Sultan's authority. The epigraph stated that the

> mention of the names and titles of our former rulers had been removed from the Friday and 'Id sermons. This had happened even though it was by their courage and striving that the land of unbelievers was conquered and the banners of Islam unfurled in every place.... I ordered that, as in former times, their names, titles and praises should be included in the sermons and that they should be remembered in the services of prayer. [Shah 1996: 22]

Firuz Shah suggests that he was restoring an old custom, but there is no evidence, textual, epigraphic or numismatic, to suggest an earlier precedent. To the contrary, a particular feature in the way authority was constituted under the Sultanate was a lack of genealogical continuity, a transiency in service that made the emergence of a military aristocracy—valorous attempts notwithstanding—very difficult [Kumar 1994, 2006, 2014].

[19] For an interesting if limited study of this aspect see Sarkar 2006.

Going against the grain of Sultanate political practice, Firuz Tughluq's genealogical accounting placed him within a larger lineage of Delhi Sultans: monarchs whose contributions had made Islam stable and prosperous. Their individual foibles were immaterial; that Delhi Sultans were the undisputed protectors and leaders of the Muslim community had to be acknowledged by Muslims as they congregated for prayer every Friday. As he recounted in this epigraph/text, Firuz Tughluq memorialized the presence of these monarchs in the *wilayat* of Delhi by repairing their mausoleums, mosques, reservoirs and palaces. His accomplishments were recognized by the 'Abbasid Caliph, descendents of the Prophet's uncle, whose gift of the Prophet's footprint was celebrated by the construction of a huge shrine just outside the Sultan's new capital [Kumar 2014: 28-30; Welch 1997]. This was a carefully engineered programme that created a palpable record of historical figures that had contributed to the making of the Sultanate capital, but as the agent that reconstituted this past, Firuz Tughluq also engraved his presence within that genealogical litany of heroes. The *Futuhat-i Firuz Shahi* was a monumental historiographical intervention at a time when history and historicization were so crucial in transcribing personal and settlement identities; it reflected a balance in the way Sufi and Sultanate identities could be harmonized and [re-] crafted in the production of a fourteenth-century Muslim order.

By the 1330s the death of the great Chishti and Suhrawardy Shaykhs and their disciples also led to disruptive succession crises within Sufi fraternities as well. This affected the internal coherence of Sufi congregations and led to larger structural shifts in Sufi-Sultan relations. When Chishti Shaykhs like Baba Farid (d. 1265) or the Suhrawardy Baha al-Din Zakariyya (d. 1267) died, their graves were tended and managed as shrines by family members. These successors (*sajjada nishin*s) preserved the charisma of the saint and through their astute management turned the grave-sites in their charge into important pilgrimage centers with a huge following [Eaton 1984; Green 2012]. The administration of these sites required subventions where, other than local devotees, the Tughluq Sultans, particularly Muhammad Tughluq, emerged as major patrons. Muhammad Tughluq was close to Baba Farid's grandson and great-grandson, 'Ala al-Din Mauj Darya (d. 1334) and Mu'izz al-Din (d. 1338), constructing a resplendent mausoleum at Pakpattan for the former in 1335. During the same time period, Muhammad Tughluq also patronized the grandson of Baha al-Din Zakariyya, Shaykh Rukn al-Din (d. 1334-1335) and also constructed a massive mausoleum in his honour in Multan. At a succession dispute on Rukn al-Din's death, Muhammad Tughluq intervened in favour of his son, Shaykh Hud, but later did not hesitate to execute him on charges of impropriety. Quite in contrast to Sufi Shaykhs, it was clearly easier for the Sultanate to associate with and influence shrines [Eaton 1984].

While the Sultans' unabashed exercise of brutal authority remained a constant feature through this period, it would be a mistake to read this alone as the significant

feature in the relationship between the monarchs and the Sufis. Instead, more telling would be the coherence with which both created overlapping social and intellectual spaces for themselves in the emerging templates that constituted mid-fourteenth-century Muslim society. Although the friction between the two over their mutual roles and in the performance of their respective duties did not end, these multiple disciplinary formations were now coming closer in the ways in which they communicated authority. Their locations in the larger Muslim social world meant that they impacted on each other in significant ways and perhaps the clearest visible evidence of their dialogical relationship was evident in that Muhammad Tughluq invested in the construction of elaborate mausolea for the Chishtis and Suhrawardys in Pakpattan and Multan [Hillenbrand 1992; A. Khan 1974]. It is beguiling to note then, that the execution of these projects carried elements of the architectural form of the sepulchre of the Sultan's father, Ghiyas al-Din Tughluq (d. 1324), in Delhi (see Figures 10.3, 10.4, and 10.5). As the organization of the Sultanate and the Sufis became more elaborate, the exercise of managing resources, personnel, even histories brought the realms of the two in closer proximity. Sufis and Sultans still clashed violently, but because both had larger and sometimes shared social investments they could not let discordance become pivotal aspects in their relationships [Digby 1984].

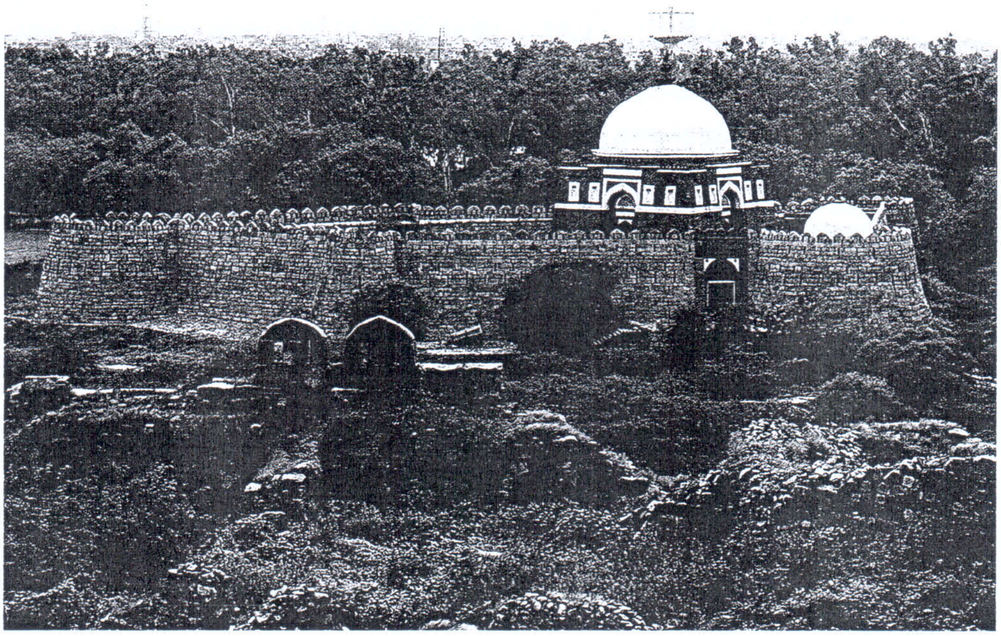


Fig. 10.3: Ghiyas al-Din Tughluq's tomb, d. 1324

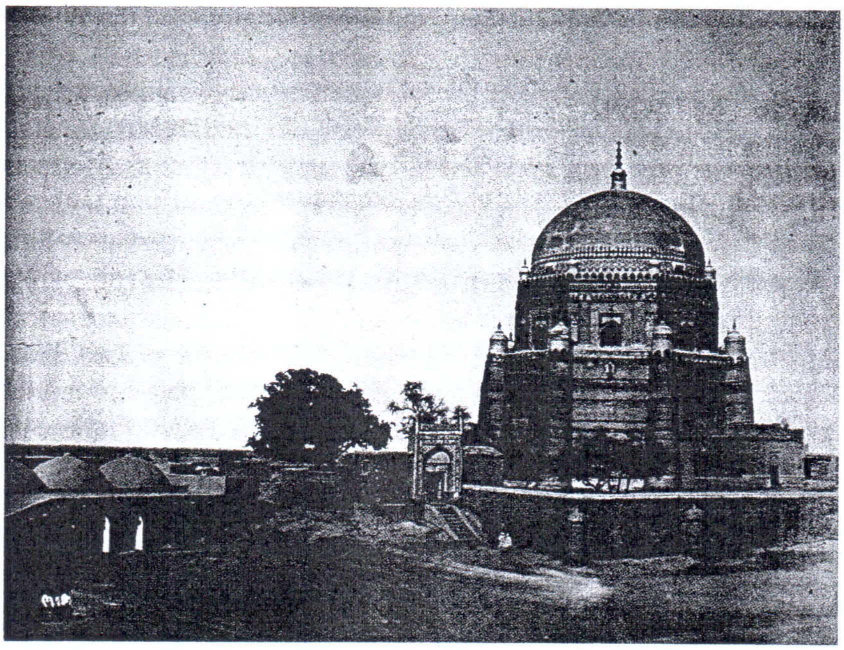


Fig. 10.4: Shaykh Rukn al-Din's tomb in Multan



Fig. 10.5: Tomb of 'Ala al-Din Mauj-i Darya at Pakpattan

5. The Sufi as Qutb, 1380-1420: Competition and Stability of the Wilayat

The invasion of Timur at the end of the fourteenth century heightened the political crisis that had gripped the Sultanate after the death of Firuz Tughluq when its many servants competed with each other and the monarch's successors over a share of authority in Delhi. In the provinces, Tughluqid governors, already quite autonomous, gradually sundered their links with Delhi and established independent Sultanates. Delhi had suffered such experiences earlier, but this time there was no regrouping of its territories under a new monarch.

Whereas historians no longer regard the fifteenth century as a 'twilight' phase of the Sultanate, crediting instead the plethora of competing patrons for the making of a burgeoning military labour market and cultural efflorescence, this interpretation still renders the fifteenth century unique, disconnecting it from the long history of settlements, immigration, mobilization of resources and voluminous textual production that had gained momentum through the fourteenth century.[20] Instead we have to keep in mind that there was no cataclysmic rupture in social and political formation that occurred with Timur's sacking of Delhi in 1398-1399. The political dismemberment of the Sultanate was not a new development—for the better part of the fourteenth century, Delhi had very slight control over settlements in Bengal, Bihar, Baghelkhand, Bundelkhand, large portions of central and western Rajasthan. On the other hand, settlements in the Punjab, Sind, Gujarat, Malwa, Deogir and the Deccan regions, suffered Delhi's coercive intrusions, but only for short durations. And areas in closer proximity to Delhi, such as Awadh, had already established their autonomous roots.

In a wonderful overview of the expansion of Sufi congregations in the fourteenth century Simon Digby noted of Awadh, "... the links between the Muslims in the Awadh countryside and metropolis of Dehli were not yet broken, even though a move towards a new integration with the local environment had appeared amid these remote colonists" [Digby 2004: 343]. Digby went on to remark that '... The literary tradition of the Awadhi *premakhyan*s had come into being with startling suddenness (in the early fifteenth century) as a result of the eastward migration of Muslim settlers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and the establishment of their settlements in the area ...' [Digby 2004: 350]. The import of Digby's acute observations was masked by a reference to these processes as the 'Provincialisation of the Delhi Sultanate'. It would be tragic, however, if readers missed the brunt of the scholar's arguments, assuming a simple devolution of authority from center to province as the state collapsed. Digby's interventions, on the other hand, were not statist. In his argument, localities gained identity, and political and cultural credibility not from their administrative [dis-]

[20] For the burgeoning military labour market from the fifteenth century see Kolff 1990 and for the cultural efflorescence of the period, Orsini and Sheikh 2014.

association with Delhi, but through their histories of engagement with local milieus which included the processes of migration, settlement and textualization to which he drew exemplary attention.

As a result, we need to reconsider the years coterminous with Timur's sack of Delhi as both, a time of disorder and great political opportunity. The political fragmentation of the post-Timurid years had left several Tughluqid military commanders as aspiring monarchs but with indifferent social claims to political power. Parvenu and humble social origins had never appeared as insurmountable disabilities to the Delhi Sultans in the past nor was it an issue for the fifteenth century incumbents. But in contrast to the turbulent fortunes of the Sultanate military elite through the thirteenth into the fourteenth century, what had altered in the interim was the stature of the *ahl-i qalam*, the people of the pen—the litterateurs, jurists, theologians, secretarial elite and Sufis—whose reproduction of knowledge and status within their lineages over the past generation had given them a huge social credence.[21] The respect gained by these individuals marked them as the real aristocrats of the expanding social world of fifteenth-century Muslims. This sentiment was already in evidence in the histories of authors like 'Isami in the mid-fourteenth century, but by the early fifteenth century, Sultans, their military commanders and the common soldiers acknowledged the presence of this new world through their association with Sufi *khanqah*s, their pilgrimage to Sufi shrines and by recourse to divination and dream interpretations. In the 1420s when 'Afif produced his retrospective account of Firuz Tughluq's reign, the author insinuated a complicated circumambulatory pilgrimage into his narrative that took the newly crowned monarch to the shrine of Baba Farid and Qutb al-Din Munawwar's *khanqah* in Hansi in search of benediction prior to his arrival in Delhi.[22]

Some aspects of these developments are usefully brought out by the history of Sayyid Muhammad Husayni Gisudaraz, a *khalifa* of Nasir al-Din Chiragh, whose life usefully spans before and after Timur's invasion. Gisudaraz came from an old Sayyid Delhi family with Sufi inclinations. This distinguished family had important links with the emerging fourteenth-century Chishti fraternity in Delhi, an important reason

[21] Sufis might reside uncomfortably within the category of the *ahl-i qalam* since they are regarded as privileging intuitive over textual interpretation. This would ignore, however, the strong emphasis amongst Sufis upon the textual foundations of belief—the Quran and *Hadith*. The interpretation of this knowledge, they would argue, was inspired by a truth that was emancipated from its material, external bonds (*nafs*) and careful mystical instruction would lead the novitiate to this goal. In sum, the Sufis were important pedagogues and exegetes and their rejection of external knowledge should not be conflated to a summary rejection of textual traditions.

[22] See 'Afif 1888-1891: 27-29, 61-62, 82-87. These important transitions make it necessary for historians to use retrospective fifteenth-sixteenth century accounts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries with great caution.

perhaps for their eviction when Muhammad Tughluq relocated the old elite residents of *Dihli-i kuhna* to Daulatabad in 1328-1329 [Jackson 1986, 1999: 255-277]. In Daulatabad Gisudaraz's father established a reputation as a Shaykh and his grave became a center of pilgrimage. Gisudaraz, however, returned to the capital in his teens and lived continuously in Delhi for about six decades (1336-1399), his travels giving him a first-hand experience of the expansion of Muslim settlements into central India, Gujarat and the Deccan.

While in Delhi, through the middle of the fourteenth century, Gisudaraz was a prominent member of the Chishti fraternity. But it is important to note that, later protestations notwithstanding, he was probably never appointed as deputy, by Nasir al-Din Chiragh.[23] Nor had he an independent *khanqah* in the capital. Although he had shown evidence of his mystical knowledge and scholarship in his *Sharh-i Tamhidat*, a commentary on 'Ayn al-Qudat's work, he had not produced a *malfuz* of his discourses. These should not cloud our appreciation of his influence in Delhi; he was clearly a respected scholar and mystic who had remained relatively quiescent in the persecution of antinomian practices that prevailed in Sultan Firuz Shah's reign and which claimed the life of Mas'ud Bakk [Ernst 1985]. And yet, the size of his following and organizational abilities were clearly evident when the news of the defeat of Delhi's forces by Timur reached the capital; the hurriedly put together group of evacuees organized by the Shaykh comprised over seventy people including his family, servants and other friends. As he fled the capital fearing imminent attack it is clear that he was in command of considerable resources; he deployed his widespread network of disciples and well wishers to provide safe sanctuaries where his group could find succour in their travels.

The *tazkirat* of Gisudaraz, the *Siyar-i Muhammadi,* informs us that the Shaykh's flight from Delhi was facilitated in particular by his disciple 'Ala al-Din Gwaliyari.[24] Gisudaraz was sensitive to the role-reversal; rather than the disciple seeking sanctuary in the care of his spiritual master, it was the Pir who was looking for succour. Gisudaraz's rewarded 'Ala al-Din by appointing him his first *khalifa* and it was during this period of forced itinerancy that Gisudaraz organized his disciples into a formal congregation, searching for a hospitable site to establish his *khanqah*. After meandering in the region of Chanderi, the group eventually reached Cambay in July 1399 where they were respectfully received by Gujarat's new Sultan, Zafar Khan (r. 1391-1411). Gisudaraz offered to become his spiritual guide, an offer which was politely declined; the Gujarat Sultan already had links with the Suhrawardy hospice

[23] For details see Digby 1984: 82-88. Digby notes the uncertainty in the spiritual transmission of authority to Gisudaraz and also notes that the records surrounding Gisudaraz stress his identification as the head of the fraternity in Delhi.

[24] For a review of Gisudaraz's travels see Digby 2004: 325-330; Eaton 2005; Alam and Subrahmanyam 2007: 48-54. Their accounts are based upon the *Siyar-i Muhammadi*.

at Uchch under Makhdum-i Jahaniyan. Gisudaraz moved on towards his father's tomb at Daulatabad, where he received an invitation from the Bahamanid monarch, Sultan Firuz Shah (r. 1397-1422), to visit Gulbarga. Here Gisudaraz established his *khanqah* and spent the last two decades of his life [Digby 2004: 325-330; Eaton 2005; Alam and Subrahmanyam 2007: 48-54].

Gisudaraz was hardly the first Chishti to settle in the Deccan—Burhan al-Din Gharib (d. 1337) had moved to Daulatabad nearly a century earlier. As a well-respected disciple of Nizam al-Din Auliya, Burhan al-Din Gharib's claims that he was the true successor of his master and not Nasir al-Din Chiragh, were circulated in the large corpus of writings associated with his *khanqah* [Ernst 1992: 118-123; Digby 1984: 77-89]. This was a deeply contentious issue which had travelled to Delhi and elicited a firm denial from Nasir al-Din.[25] Burhan al-Din had a considerable reputation in Daulatabad with the Tughluq governors but the influence of his successors had declined under the Bahamanids. Nevertheless his grave site was an important pilgrimage shrine in Gulbarga.

By the time Gisudaraz reached Gulbarga he was already seventy-five years old and his spiritual master had been dead for over four decades, so there was some urgency with which he moved to repair the remaining lacuna—the production of a textual account of his teachings. Within a hectic nine months, between 16 March through 5 December 1400, Gisudaraz's son Muhammad Akbar Husayni compiled the *malfuz* of his father, the *Jawami' al-Kalim* [Husayni 1937]. In consonance with what were emerging Chishti traditions of the fourteenth century, the establishment of his *wilayat* in Gulbarga and a textualization of his history and dicta were conjoined exercises. But Gisudaraz went further. Over the next two decades he emerged as one of the most renowned scholars of his time, with a formidable repertory that included Quranic exegesis, *hadith* commentary, a biography of the Prophet, a work on jurisprudence, and several texts on mysticism.[26] We can see in this voluminous production the continuing processes of textualization that had picked up from the mid-fourteenth century. Certainly, this was not unique to Gisudaraz. Nearly similar volumes of material were emerging from the region of Awadh under the patronage of the Sharqi Sultans, and if Gisudaraz was an exceptionally productive author, Awadh was unique for the range of materials, their multilingualism and *qasba* provenance of this literary outpouring.

But there were some marked shifts through these years as well, especially in the context of the discourse of the state. The rising crescendo of literary materials from Sufis as they consolidated their congregations completely drowned the stray Persian chroniclers that eulogized the monarchies of the age. By the mid-fifteenth century the

[25] Note that the first two *majlis* in the *Khair al-Majalis* are concerned with Burhan al-Din Gharib. Qalandar 1959: 8-12.

[26] For a useful account of Gisudaraz's writings see Hussaini 1976: 29-37.

last of the great Delhi-centric histories was produced by Bihamad Khani (completed 1438) but no chronicler would fill the breach for the coming hundred years and more.[27] Brief dynastic chronicles dotted the Malwa and Gujarat Sultanates in the interim, but there was nothing from the great Sultanates of Bengal and Jaunpur and certainly no grand overview in the old Sultanate tradition. As the evidence from the state gradually diminished and disappeared, it yielded the high ground to Sufi litterateurs and their representations.[28] Rather than the trans-regional state or the grand *tazkirat* renditions of the Chishti congregation in the model of the *Siyar al-Auliya*, far greater attention was now paid to local communities where vernacular languages could sometimes find pride of place [Orsini and Sheikh 2014, Orsini 2012]. Although the Shaykhs had always been the locus-mundi, the *qutb* of the local congregations, they were now emerging as the subjects and authors of a distinctive fifteenth century literary corpus.

It is interesting to notice the response of this literature to the politics of the fifteenth century and the creative efforts to link the local with the universal. For instance, Gisudaraz's *Jawami' al-Kalim* displayed little stylistic uniqueness to distinguish it from the earlier Chishti *malfuzat*. Although much larger than the earlier *malfuzat*, it mimed texts like the *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad* in different ways—it authenticated each assembly with a date although changed contexts made this quite unnecessary.[29] There was an equal emphasis in retaining the conversational mode in textualizing his assemblies; the Shaykh answered questions, joked and inquired after the welfare of members in the audience in the same way as Nizam al-Din and Nasir al-Din had in their *malfuzat* [Kh. Khan forthcoming]. The Shaykh also relied on parables and anecdotes for pedagogical purposes, leaving their meanings open for 'discovery' by the reader/listener. It was far more detailed—in contrast to fleeting references to Jogis in the earlier *malfuzat*, readers and listeners were regaled in the *Jawami al-Kalim* with many more incidents of Chishti interaction with these wandering ascetics [Digby 1970: 22-30]. But these conversations appeared in the *Jawami' al-Kalim* with

[27] Khani 1972. This *Tarikh* was actually written for the Malikzada rulers of Kalpi, but it was in the nature of the old-fashioned 'universal history' that commenced with the Prophets, meandering its way through the Caliphs and Sultans to the incumbent monarchs. The Kalpi rulers were Tughluq governors and the *Tarikh* gives a full account of that dynasty.

[28] For a useful review of the literary materials available from the Sultanate of Gujarat, see Balachandran 2012.

[29] Sijzi wanted to communicate the authenticity of Nizam al-Din's discourses recorded in the *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad* and hence mentioned how the Pir had edited and helped in the correction of the final text. The dating of each *majlis* was an interesting genuflexion towards a *hadith* based *tawarikh* tradition, providing the reader with material evidence about the provenance and date of each gathering. Whereas Sijzi's milieu made the search for such authenticity comprehensible, it was already unnecessary in Gisudaraz's lifetime, and more of a literary form than a dire necessity.

the same seeming randomness present in the earlier *malfuzat,* with forced transitions, all suggestive of their original provenance within an oral milieu.

There were other details in the *Jawami al-Kalim* that were not novel or unique; they possessed a new, charged focus, because of the altered context of the emerging fifteenth century. Take for example, the great interest shown by all the Chishti saints in the roots of their learning. In each of their *malfuzat* the Shaykhs had displayed their formidable scholastic abilities of theological exegesis, of *hadith*, Sufi doctrine and history. But this archive of knowledge would have possessed little meaning had they not been able to convince their congregations that it was animated by an esoteric truth that they had gained from masters who had already achieved this station. Nizam al-Din Auliya highlighted the role that his teacher Baba Farid had played in his education and Nasir al-Din Chiragh had focused on Nizam al-Din Auliya. By contrast, Gisudaraz leap-frogged generations; the *Jawami al-Kalim* was unique in drawing attention to the teaching of not just the Shaykh's master, Nasir al-Din Chiragh, but also in giving inordinate attention to the master's master, Nizam al-Din Auliya. Because there was some debate about Nasir al-Din Chiragh's unique access to his teacher's wisdom, Gisudaraz's discourses referred at length to the teachings of Nizam al-Din Auliya, whose position in the constellation of Chishti masters was undisputed, especially after the contribution of the *tazkirat,* the *Siyar al-Awliya*. In the context of his anxieties over Burhan al-Din's claims to succession from Nizam al-Din Auliya, it was important for Gisudaraz to weigh in regarding his own master's legitimate succession. The *Siyar-i Muhammadi* respectfully recognized Burhan al-Din's eminence but also insinuated his recognition of Nasir al-Din's superior rights as Nizam al-Din's successor. As the *tazkirat* commented, "Maulana Burhan al-Din Gharib had perfect faith in our Shaykh [Nasir al-Din], saying just this: 'If I had not been connected to the revered Shaykh al-Islam Nizam al-Din, I would be connected to Maulana Mahmud Chiragh-i Dehli'" [cited by Ernst 1992: 121]. Such a clarification was vital to clarify Gisudaraz's own position in Gulbarga; the textual records produced by his disciples would unambiguously mention that he was Nasir al-Din's appointed *khalifa.*

This also meant that Gisudaraz paid close attention to the site of Nizam al-Din and Nasir al-Din's mystical practice—Delhi. Through his discourses in the *Jawami al-Kalim*, Gisudaraz transported his audience to Delhi and to the court of the great Sufi saints Nizam al-Din Auliya and Nasir al-Din Chiragh. He taught them the history of these Shaykhs and through them the history of Sufism. But he did more: he talked of the city of Delhi as the *wilayat* of these great Shaykhs which was transformed into a space that was always in dialogue with the supernatural; its old residents were also charged with this charisma. Through anecdotes and parables about ordinary people, Gisudaraz taught the residents of Gulbarga the experience of lived Islam in the great capital. The quotidian was made significant and the humble Muslim transformed

as an agent of God. In Gulbarga, a region that was establishing its new political credentials, the accent on people of humble origin brought Gisudaraz the credence to appear as 'Bandanawaz', a popular title that was ascribed to him by his followers because he was understood to be the 'Benefactor of the indigent and the weak'. What is significant to note in all of these illustrations is how stock ideas present in the early *malfuzat* were provided significant meanings in new contexts. This was an important interleaving of the synchronic and the diachronic through which long standing Sufi traditions were provided contextual meanings within a precise historical moment. These developments also meant that the *Shari'a*-minded and mystic traditions that constituted congregational Islam were so braided in the fifteenth century that their disaggregation was a challenge for future Sultans. In the face of Gisudaraz's immense popularity in Gulbarga and his eminence as a 'Friend of God', Sultan Firuz Bahamani asked the saint to bless his son as the future monarch of the realm. Gisudaraz balked, favouring Ahmad, the Sultan's brother instead. These events plunged Gisudaraz into political disfavour but it furthered his popularity. He was even more like the Delhi Sufis Nizam al-Din Auliya and Nasir al-Din Chiragh, whose saintliness combated impious and brutish monarchs. But the developments in the intervening years had also made a difference—Sultan Firuz had to eventually comply and accept his brother Ahmad as the future monarch. And it was with his blessings that Sultan Ahmad ascended the Bahamanid throne in 1422.[30]

Conclusion

In the middle of the thirteenth century, Juzjani had noted that Sufi saints had blessed the slave Iltutmish with the throne of Delhi. Slightly more than a half century later, similar kinds of stories were heard by the Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta in the capital, this time regarding Sultan Balban. At the turn of the thirteenth century, Khwaja Gurg proclaimed that 'Ala al-Din Khalaji became the Sultan of Delhi through his benediction. All of these were compelling stories and their different provenance—as anecdotes in a chronicle, as hearsay that lingered in a travelogue, and as eulogy in the *tazkirat* of Khwaja Gurg—were reflective of the wide circulation of these ideas in differing literary mediums. Other than reflective of the wide circulation of these ideas, their textualization and later recollection were also suggestive of the processes by which a sensibility of the charismatic power of the Sufis was repeatedly confirmed. Buried in these reports were other details such as the attempt of Sidi Muwallih to seize the throne of Delhi and Nizam al-Din's prophesy that peremptorily

[30] For the interesting account of the relations between the servitors of Gisudaraz's shrine and the Bahamanid monarchs, see Digby 1986.

ended Sultan Ghiyas al-Din Tughluq's reign (d. 1324). As we seek to parse Sufi-Sultan relations we may wonder, what were the differences in these representations and how do we distinguish between history and historiography?

It is important to keep in mind that the study of Sufism will always have to contest its synchronic self-representation: in its search for the 'real' truth behind the mundane externality of temporal events, Sufism itself could not acknowledge structural transformations, only personal differences between Shaykhs. Not surprisingly, modern historians have found the nature of their archive a major hurdle in their research. In an effort to break this gridlock, I researched Sufi-Sultan relations through three coordinates. The first emphasized the means by which congregational Sufism was given form: the pedagogy, the texts, the construction of the authority of the Shaykh and the master-student networks that framed its rituals and practices. A second vector of analysis remained attentive to the discursive formation of the united, homogenous Muslim community and the authoritarian modes of its frequent enunciation—who and what were the agents involved and in what contexts was the scrutiny of socially cognizable behaviour imposed? The third coordinate focused on the establishment and dispersal of Muslim settlements, the sites that supported Sufi *khanqahs*, the arenas wherein there was the circulation of this knowledge formation and the contexts where there were sometimes volatile exchanges between different members of the Muslim community.

Keeping the interactions between these three vectors in mind, it would be relatively easy to conclude that there was no linear evolution in the relationship between Sufis and Sultans. Organizational Sufism that focused closely on its history and pedagogy had a close relationship with settlements, which meant that it was spatially differentiated and manifest with greater or lesser complexity in the various regions of Muslim residence. Its organization also had a vital correlation with a textualized, scriptural Islam that did not embrace Muslims within the community of Islam with equal intensity. And, ultimately, these coordinates needed to be sufficiently textured to respond to the heterogeneity amongst the Sufis and the *'ulama* whose votaries also possessed confusing and overlapping qualities. Despite these qualifications, the circulation of knowledge systems meant that the medieval observer did not have great difficulty in comprehending the different systems of thought that were circulating within a rapidly expanding public arena. This also meant that conflict resolutions were also developing. There were still the excesses when Sufis were exiled and executed but equally, the boundaries of what was regarded as acceptable/unacceptable conduct for Muslims were getting to be increasingly enlarged and layered. Uninterrupted immigration, especially of Afghans through the fifteenth century, the great mobility of Muslims throughout the subcontinent in the fourteenth century, the continuous establishment and expansion of settlements, meant that the dialogue between the temporal and the spiritual was not wholly determined

by the vicissitudes in the fortunes of the state. While their outcomes were frequently determined by local contexts and histories, their tellings conflated the local with the universal in creative and interesting ways.

So, if we were to go back to the rhetorical questions in the beginning of the conclusion: what was the difference in the Sufi interventions that blessed otherwise nondescript individuals with the good fortune of becoming a Sultan? On the one hand, not much: it was a rhetorical mode of communicating the prescient ability possessed by Sufis to see the extraordinary in people who otherwise appeared nondescript. On the other hand, they differed considerably depending upon who was articulating this sentiment. The subject would appear most overtly in court chronicles like Juzjani, 'Isami or 'Afif; it would also appear, but somewhat less frequently, in retrospective *tazkirat*s such as Gisudaraz's *Siyar-i Muhammadi*, or Khwaja Gurg's *Asrar al-Majzubin*. It was rarely, if ever, voiced by a Shaykh in one of his discourses that would be recounted in the *malfuzat*. The provenance of these claims is important because it is reflective of the differing constituencies within the Muslim community and their varied alignments with mystical charisma. As important centers of political organization in the Muslim community, both Sufis and Sultans claimed religious sanction for their authority, with complex recourses to theology and history to sustain their divergent claims. Although their intent might have been the same, the textual records of the thirteenth and fourteenth century clearly wanted their readership to have partisan responses to these claims. And even as we parse the larger structural transformations in the Sultanate that nuanced the relationships between the two sets of protagonists, the contexts of the tellings of these relationships is extremely important.

We should not forget that the great veneration and authority gained by Sufi Shaykhs from vast bodies of Muslims was always only a part of the story. Much like Gisudaraz and Burhan al-Din Gharib, Sufis constantly competed with each other and with the '*ulama*. As their investments in the politics of the local settlements increased, their ambitious ventures at establishing their fraternities as much as their antinomian practices frequently subjected them to harsh discipline and punishment. Significantly, as the narratives of the Sultanate receded in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, it is the narratives of the local practice and teaching of these Sufi Shaykhs that gained the high ground. But while we are able to glean the quality of their teachings, without the robust narrative of the state the challenge to historicize and contextualize them in their local milieus lingered. These difficulties diminish markedly once Mughal patronage revived historiography in the second half of the sixteenth century. Despite all their limitations in creating a misleading Sufi-Sultan binary, we have to appreciate how a critical reading of this dyad allows for an inflected reading of Muslim society and politics.

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